

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1 – 22. Canceled.

23(Original). A communication arrangement for communicating a data signal using a cable television transmission medium, the communication arrangement comprising:

a 1:N rate encoder, coupled to an input data stream and configured to reproduce a symbol or FEC block represented by a segment of the input data stream N times;  
a transmission arrangement configured to use a plurality of outputs to transmit each reproduced symbol or FEC block using a distinct transmission channel; and  
a receiver, coupled to the outputs of the transmission arrangement and configured to perform soft-combining of signals received from the outputs of the transmission arrangement and to output an estimate of the symbol or FEC block.

24(Original). A communication arrangement, according to claim 23, wherein the soft-combining comprises at least one of mean squared error estimation, identification of burst noise within a data packet, weighted combining, and selective combining.

25(Original). A communication arrangement, according to claim 23, wherein one of the transmission channels is used to transmit an original message and the remaining transmission channels are used to perform retransmission.

26(Original). A communication arrangement, according to claim 23, wherein a plurality of information bits are used to represent a symbol to be transmitted, and wherein the transmission channels are used to transmit the information bits using a delay-encoded mapping scheme.

27(Original). A communication method for communicating a data signal using a cable television transmission medium, the communication method comprising:

reproducing a symbol or FEC block represented by a segment of an input data stream a preselected number of times;  
using a plurality of transmission channels to transmit each reproduced symbol or FEC block using a distinct transmission channel; and  
performing soft-combining of signals received from the transmission channels.

28(Original). A communication method, according to claim 27, wherein the soft-combining comprises at least one of mean squared error estimation, identification of burst noise within a data packet, weighted combining, and selective combining.

29(Original). A communication method, according to claim 27, further comprising:  
transmitting an original message using one of the transmission channels; and  
performing retransmission using the remaining transmission channels.

30(Original). A communication method, according to claim 27, further comprising:  
using a plurality of information bits to represent a symbol to be transmitted; and  
using the transmission channels to transmit the information bits using a delay-encoded mapping scheme.